

# **The Lord's Work in Moldova**

## **September 7-19, 2023**

Brethren,

Let me first thank you for your support in my recent trip to Moldova. This was my first evangelistic trip abroad, and so I tried to set no expectations, and instead attempt to learn everything I could from the process. I am deeply thankful to the Lord for allowing me to see His work in another field, for the Gentry & Stuckey families for allowing me to tag along, and for the brethren in Moldova being so welcoming. My continued prayer is that I was able to encourage and strengthen the brethren there even a fraction of what they did for me. Below I have lined out information about the work in Moldova, and then about our trip. Please feel free always to ask any questions or request more information. I am also happy to come and share about what our Lord is doing in Moldova. — Caleb

### **The Republic of Moldova.**

Moldova as a place can trace its roots back centuries. In recent (last 100-200 years) history, the now nation was once part of Romania and of the Soviet Union. In the early 1990s, Moldova broke away from USSR to form their own sovereign nation. Many citizens live in poverty, as the country is the second poorest European country, only behind Ukraine. Citizens speak Russian and/or Romanian, and the younger generation is at least conversational in English.

Moldova is attempting to make progress, as they have reduced the number in poverty over the last decade, and are becoming more secularized. It is, however, still illegal in Moldova to openly proselytize. Registered groups (100+ members) can do some more, but there are work arounds. You can invite individuals to a discussion (not using the word study) and that is permissible. This creates some challenges, but there is still much work to do in Moldova.

There are four sound churches to our knowledge in Moldova: Chisinau, Balti (pronounced Belts), Bender (pronounced Benderi), & Tiraspol. We were blessed to work inside three of these congregations and with members from all four during our stay.

Serghei Corcimaru is the preacher in Chisinau. They meet on Sunday evenings, and so on Sunday mornings, he travels to one of the other groups. Victor Trucanu preaches in Balti whenever Serghei is not there. Vasili Vladav preaches for the church at Bender and Vasili Nikoli works with the church in Tiraspol. I thank the Lord for all four men, and could write simply about them and their families, but maybe another time, and I would love to tell you about how the Gospel came to these areas, so feel free to ask!

If recent statistics are to be believed, 91% of the country is orthodox, but only 76% of the country believe in God. There are many people who are Orthodox but have no personal relationships with God. It is merely a part of their national heritage. To be Moldovan is to be Orthodox in many ways.

## **Our Team**

We went as a team of six on this trip. **John & Stacy Gentry** lead the team. They have lived in Moldova for a couple of years, and make regular trips back to be with the brethren. They currently labor with the church in Galena, IN. Their daughter, **Julianna**, also came and was a tremendous asset to our team. She and I worked closely together a few days, and I was very thankful to have her along for the journey. The final two members of our team were **Phil & Beth Stuckey**. This was Beth's second trip, and Phil has taken several with John before. They labor with the church in Edna, TX. The Gentrys and I met in Nashville on Thursday, September 7th and flew to New Jersey to meet-up with the Stuckeys before making the hop across the way.

## **The Trip**

### **Friday, September 8th**

We had a long wait on the tarmac in New Jersey, but we finally took off and made it to Vienna about three hours later than planned. We were able to make our connection, thankfully, and we made a safe journey into Moldova. Serghei and Victor met us at the airport and drove us over to the flat we had rented for the trip. We got groceries, ate a little dinner, and then walked to the meeting place for our first lessons. Throughout this trip, we are looking at Paul's Letters and we have used our nightly studies to look at themes in his writings. I spoke about the Call to Imitation. Phil spoke on the Guarantee & Seal of the Holy Spirit, and John spoke on Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage. We had very few in person, but we had

brethren across Moldova and Eastern Europe joining in via Skype, Zoom, Viber, & phone calls.

After the lessons, we headed back to get a good night's sleep, but unfortunately only four of us were able to sleep peacefully.

### **Saturday, September 9th**

We had not planned much for this day in order to give our bodies time to rest and adjust. We woke up to learn that John (and thereby Stacy) had been up most of the night with some severe intestinal pain. Phil and I went to the pharmacy just in front of our flat (thankfully he spoke English) and tried to get medicine to help John. The decision was made for John & Stacy to stay at the flat while the rest of us would walk to the Corcimaru's flat to for a meal before preaching.

Anna was very hospitable to us throughout our trip, and she prepared traditional Moldovan foods for us to enjoy. The freshness and flavor of the food was a real treat! We went over to the meeting place for services, and John felt strong enough to present via zoom on the Introductory prayers of Paul. I spoke on the Body of Christ & Phil spoke about Human Divisions being abolished in Christ.

On the way home, we spoke about plans for the following day. If John was better, we would keep the plan of the Gentrys going to Bender while I would tag along with the Stuckeys to Balti. If not, Julianna and I would go to Balti while the Stuckeys would travel to Bender.

### **Sunday, September 10th**

John was not feeling better, unfortunately, and so we had to go with plan B. Juliana and I traveled with Victor & Paul Corcimaru (Serghei's 16 year-old son, and our translator) to Balti. It takes about 2 to 2 1/2 hours to travel from the flat to where the church meets. We traveled up the road and arrived just in time to meet with the brethren there.

The church meets in Sister Dora's apartment, which is extremely small. She is on the fourth floor of an apartment building, with no elevator. All the members were present (5) plus Liuda's two children. Also present was a visiting lady and her two daughters. We were tightly in the apartment, with a few even sitting on Dora's bed. The church is primarily women, so I spoke about the value of women from the genealogy of Jesus as recorded by Matthew. Julianna (not previously scheduled to do so) taught an impromptu women's class on contentment and peace. I could hear pieces from Dora's kitchen, and she did a fantastic job.

We drove back to have lunch with the Trucanus, Corcimar, and Stuckeys. We then traveled over to the meeting place to meet with the church in Chisinau. Phil spoke on Living in the Hope of the Resurrection. After worship services, Beth taught a young ladies' class for Julianna, and two sisters who worship there: Melissa & Carolina Vinocurov. While they had their class, Phil taught on The Ascension of the Lord and I spoke about being the Chosen People of God.

### **Monday, September 11th**

Phil and I took a trip to the Bible society to purchase Bibles for the local congregation to use and for those in need of Bibles. We bought supplies for us to make meals as well as planned out children's classes and more for the remainder of the trip.

John was a little better, so Stacy joined us with the church this evening and taught a children's class for Vica Babin's son. I spoke about then & now (the change that should occur) and Phil spoke on the Wrath of God. Let me pause to speak briefly about Vica. She became a Christian last year. Throughout our trip, she brought us into contact with at least six non-Christians that were her family or friends as well as brought three or four children into kids classes. Her heart is on fire for the Lord, and I praise God for the work He does through His servant Vica.

### **Tuesday, September 12th**

Our original plan was to visit an orphanage this day. We had learned that there were only five left open in the country as Moldova moves towards a foster care system instead. We were notified late Monday night that the orphanage we planned to visit had been closed very recently by the state. Tuesday morning our contact was unable to get us into another orphanage. We instead took the day to visit the downtown square area, including the main Orthodox cathedral. It was nice to see Moldovans in their every-day life and experience part of the city.

John was progressing, but still unwell. Julianna taught the kids class this evening with an added kid & her mom Cate. (Vica's friend, more on her later). Phil taught about fleeing from idolatry and I spoke on the New Exodus for the Christian.

### **Wednesday, September 13th**

Today was the day of final preparations for the conference, set to begin the following day. Phil and I ran out to get last minute items and copies, before we were set to meet the Corcimar for lunch. Julianna and her mom went off on their own errands, John consulted with a good friend and American doctor who

happened to be in Europe at the time (he had food poisoning, likely from the states!). Phil, Beth, and myself went to the Corcimarus. We were supposed to eat lunch with them and two guests, but the guests were delayed at the airport so it was just Anna, Phil, Beth, and myself. We caught a taxi to the Moldovan National Museum for a lesson on the history and lifestyle of the Moldovan. It was helpful to understand more about the people and their culture. Our guests arrived in time to tour with us! Kestutis Sebagutis from Lithuania and Peter Vandeburie from Belgium came in for the lectures. It was so good to get to know them both.

### **Thursday, September 14th - Saturday, September 16th**

Thursday was the start of the 17th Annual Moldovan Bible Conference. Our theme was the Epistles of Paul. We arrived and set-up the room, laid out materials, greeted guests and had lunch before beginning. We worked with two translators: Serghei Corcimaru & Lillea. Lillea is a friend of one of the members and is the daughter of a deceased baptist minister. Lillea worked really well with us after a few bumps in the beginning. I don't believe she'd had much translation experience, but she caught on quickly.

John surprised everyone and came and presented his two lectures for the day. We had good attendance each day, averaging 35-40. This includes members from each of the four congregations, friends of the members, the two individuals mentioned earlier, plus former members of the church.

We had great conversations during these three days. We had a total of 11 joint lectures, 2 men's lectures, 2 women's lectures, 3 kid's classes, 3 Question & Answer periods, 1 Women only Q&A session, 2 singings, and countless personal conversations. We had some very good questions. One asked about how to prove to a skeptic that the Word of God is truthful, complete, and inspired. Another one asked at the end of the conference about true baptism as she began to question her orthodox one.

After the conference, we had a young people's study with the Vinocurov ladies and Paul Corcimaru. It went very well. We asked how we could help them and pray for them. Carolina was moved to tears because they don't have many people (just them, really) in their entire country who are young Christians trying to serve and follow God. She said she could tell that we were sincere. We were blessed to be able to work with them.

## **Sunday, September 17th**

For our last Sunday in Moldova, I went with the Gentrys to Bender. The church in Tiraspol came and joined us for our services. I preached about Having Passion for God Despite Opposition you may face. It is a little under two hours to the church in Bender from our flat. Part of the road is out for construction so we had to go literally “off-roads” to get to the meeting place. We had about 10 members and a visitor or two. The church there has some issues with their meeting place that we hope to be able to help resolve soon. They are the only church in Moldova to have their own building.

We drove back to the Corcimarus for lunch with Kestutis, Victor, and Corcimarus. This was the first (and only) meal where all six of us were together with the Corcimarus. After lunch, we went and met with the church in Chisinau. We had the largest crowd of the whole trip — 23, and they had 3 out sick! There were non Christians present, which was wonderful to see. Zoia, a member of the church there, had not been attending for quite some time, but even she came out and joined us.

I spoke about “So Must the Son of Man Be Lifted Up”: A look at John 3.16. The ladies taught a kids class while John spoke on true, Biblical Baptism.

Cate, mentioned earlier, only set in on the kids classes with her daughter. On Sunday night, she cried as she thanked the ladies for these classes. She said, “I have never heard the Bible explained in a way that was easy to understand”. She was so thankful that we took time to study with them, and Vica and others will help take it further. She was so happy when we shared a children’s Bible with her that she could use to read together with her daughter. Several tears were shed in our goodbyes.

## **Final Moments**

On Monday, we began the long trip home. We flew in the sea of Jews (Rosh Hashannah taking place, several Jewish individuals were flying home out of Moldova, and the airport was packed) to Vienna for our overnight layover. We spent a little time in the city seeing the large cathedral and experiencing some of the tasty Austrian cuisine. On Tuesday, September 19th, we flew home.

## **Future Plans**

If the Lord wills, I hope to return soon to Moldova. There is a possibility for 2024, but we will wait to determine the time. Right now, for 2024, I am going to Honduras January 7–19. I also plan to go to Belize in the fall, all if the Lord wills.

There are a few of the multitude of photos available below. Feel free (and please do!) ask any questions you may have! I would love to share with you more about this trip, or speak to you about future possibilities.

May in all things written here and in the future to come that God be honored and glorified.

In the Lord,

/s

Caleb Wray



Our Team for Moldova!

John, Beth, Me, Phil,  
Stacy, Julianna



Last Night in Chisinau with the  
Brethren there





The Church in Bender



The Church in Balti



Attendees at the Friday Afternoon  
Lectures of the Conference